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Circular of the Sub-Commission of the Pan-American Medical Congress on Medicinal Flora of the United States.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.

Washington, D. C., July 1, 1897.

AMERICAN MEDICINAL FLORA.

DEAR SIR: The Smithsonian Institution has undertaken to bring together all possible material bearing on the medicinal uses of plants in the United States. Arrangements have been made with a body representing the Pan-American Medical Congress (the Sub-Commission on Medicinal Flora of the United States) to elaborate a report on this subject, and the material when received will be turned over to it for investigation.

The accompanying detailed instructions relative to specimens and notes have been prepared by the Sub-Commission.

All packages and correspondence should be addressed to the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C., and marked on the outside *Medicinal Plants, for the U. S. National Museum*. Franks which will carry specimens, when of suitable size, together with descriptions and notes, free of postage through the mails, will be forwarded upon application. Should an object be too large for transmission by mail the sender is requested, before shipping it, to notify the Institution, in order that a proper authorization for its shipment may be made out.

Respectfully,

S. P. LANGLEY,

Secretary.

INSTRUCTIONS RELATIVE TO MEDICINAL PLANTS.

The Pan American Medical Congress, at its meeting held in the City of Mexico, in November, 1896, took steps to institute a systematic study of the American Medicinal Flora, through the medium of a General Commission and of special Sub-Commissions, the latter to be organized in the several countries. The Sub-Commission for the United States has been formed and consists of Dr. Valery Havard, U. S. A., chairman; Mr. Frederick V. Coville, Botanist of the U. S. Department of Agriculture; Dr. C. F. Millsbaugh, Curator of the Botanical Department of the Field Columbian Museum, Chicago; Dr. Charles Mohr, State Botanist of Alabama; Dr. W. P. Wilson, Director of the Philadelphia Commercial Museums; and Professor H. H. Rusby, of the New York College of Pharmacy. This Sub-Commission solicits information con-

cerning the medicinal plants of the United States from every one in a position to accord it. The principal points of study are as follows:

1. Local names.
2. Local uses, together with historical facts.
3. Geographical distribution and degree of abundance in the wild state.
4. Is the plant collected for market, and if so,
 - (a) At what season of the year?
 - (b) To how great an extent?
 - (c) How prepared for market?
 - (d) What is the effect of such collection upon the wild supply?
 - (e) What price does it bring?
 - (f) Is the industry profitable?
5. Is the plant, or has it ever been, cultivated, and if so, give all information on the subject, particularly as to whether such supplies are of superior quality, and whether the industry has proved profitable.
6. If not cultivated, present facts concerning the life history of the plant which might aid in determining methods of cultivation.
7. Is the drug subjected to substitution or adulteration, and if so, give information as to the plants used for this purpose.

While it is not expected that many persons will be able to contribute information on all these points concerning any plant, it is hoped that a large number of persons will be willing to communicate such partial knowledge as they possess.

It is not the important or standard drugs alone concerning which information is sought. The Sub-Commission desires to compile a complete list of the plants which have been used medicinally, however trivial such use may be. It also desires to collect all obtainable information, historical, scientific and economic, concerning our native and naturalized plants of this class, and, to that end, invites the co-operation of all persons interested. Poisonous plants of all kinds come within the scope of our inquiry, whether producing dangerous symptoms in man, or simply skin inflammation, or, as "loco-weeds," deleterious to horses, cattle and sheep. In this respect the general reputation of a plant is not so much desired as the particulars of cases of poisoning actually seen, or heard from reliable observers. It is believed that much interesting knowledge can be obtained from Indians, Mexicans and half-breeds, and that, consequently, Indian agencies and reservations are particularly favorable fields for our investigation. Such knowledge will be most acceptable when based upon known facts or experiments.

In order to assist in the study of the habits, properties and uses of medicinal plants, the Sub-Commission undertakes to furnish the name of any plant-specimen received, together with any desired information available.

Owing to the diversity in the common names of many plants, it will be necessary for reports, when not furnished by botanists or others qualified to state the botanical names with certainty, to accompany the same with some specimen of the plant sufficient for its identification. While the Sub-Commission will endeavor to determine the plant from any portion of it which may be sent, it should be appreciated that the labor of identification is very greatly decreased, and its usefulness increased, by the possession of complete material, that is, leaf, flower and fruit, and in the case of small plants the underground portion also. It is best to dry such specimens thoroughly, in a flat con-

dition under pressure, before mailing. While any convenient means for accomplishing this result may be employed, the following procedure is recommended: Select a flowering or fruiting branch, as the case may be, which, when passed, shall not exceed sixteen inches in length by ten inches in width. If the plant be an herb two or three feet high, it may be doubled to bring it within these measurements. If it possess root leaves, some of these should be included. Lay the specimen flat in a fold of newspaper and place this in a pile of newspapers, carpet felting, or some other form of paper which readily absorbs moisture, and place the pile in a dry place under a pressure of about twenty to thirty pounds, sufficient to keep the leaves from wrinkling as they dry. If a number of specimens are pressed at the same time, each is to be separated from the other by three or four folded newspapers or an equivalent in other kinds of paper.

In twelve to twenty-four hours these papers will be found saturated with the absorbed moisture and the fold containing the specimen should be transferred to dry ones. This change should be repeated in from two to five days, according to the state of the weather, the place where the drying is done, the fleshiness of the specimens, etc. The best way to secure the desired pressure is by means of a pair of strong straps, though weights will do. The best place for drying is beside a hot kitchen range. When dry the specimens should be mailed between cardboards or some other light but stiff materials which will not bend in transit.

It is a most important matter that the name and address of the sender should be attached to the package and that the specimens, if more than one, should be numbered, the sender retaining also specimens bearing the same number, to facilitate any correspondence which may follow. The Sub-Commission requests that, so far as practicable, all plants sent be represented by at least four specimens.

H. H. RUSBY, M. D.,

Chairman of the General Commission.

NEW YORK COLLEGE OF PHARMACY.

VALERY HAVARD, M. D.

Chairman of the Sub-Commission.

FORT SLOCUM, DAVIDS ISLAND, NEW YORK.

Reviews.

Nomenclaturregeln für die Beamten des Königlichen Botanischen Gartens und Museums zu Berlin. (Notizblatt. Königl. Bot. Gart. 1: 245-250. 6 Je. 1897.)

The staff of the Royal Botanical Garden and Museum of Berlin have framed a set of rules for their guidance in nomenclature, and orthography of names, of which the following is a translation with annotations:

1. The principle of priority in the choice of names of genera